

Remarks at a Democratic National Committee Reception in New York City
May 10, 2023

The President. Well, you know, it's one thing to be invited to a person's home once. They can make a mistake. But to invite the same person back twice, it's their fault. *[Laughter]* So thank you for the hospitality.

You know, there's an expression we have. I got—Father, I've got to—and by the way, I get in trouble in my Roman Catholic Church because I'm blessing myself this way these days.

[At this point, the President made the sign of the cross.]

[Laughter] It's all his fault.

Assistant to Archbishop Demetrios of America Alexander Karloutsos. See—*[inaudible]*—my altar boy here. *[Inaudible]*

The President. I tell you what. But all kidding aside, thank you, thank you, thank you.

Look, one of the things that I think is—I was raised in a family that I don't think the fundamental principles that—that we were taught are any different if my mom had been—had been "Bidenopoulos" instead of Finnegan.

She taught us that—and I mean this sincerely; I mean it from the bottom of my heart, and Father knows this. My mother used to say, "Joey, nobody is better than you, and everyone is your equal." No—and if anything went down: "Just get up, Joe. Just get up. Never bend. Never bow." Real simple propositions with my mom. And she was a sweet woman, and butter wouldn't melt in her mouth except if you crossed one of her kids.

But all kidding aside, the basic fundamental values that I find is that most ethnic communities are similar. And one of the things—I got to go back—not what I had planned on talking about, but I got to go back to Ireland for the—for the—the Irish accords, to make sure they weren't—the Brits didn't screw around and Northern Ireland didn't walk away from their commitments.

And I went back to my—my mother's mother's ancestral home in Ballina, which is in County Mayo in Ireland. And at 9:50—9:15, on a rainy night on the River Moy, in front of a cathedral, which it turned out they went back and dug up records showing my great-great-grandfather provided the bricks to build this—the—to hold up the steeple at—there were somewhere between 28- and 40,000 people in the rain standing there.

And I guess the point of it is this: We've all been through—and whether you're Greek or Irish—you went through times when we weren't respected very much, when we were treated—that we were somehow fundamentally different than other people. And it wasn't just Irish or African Americans. A whole lot—a lot of people went through it.

But you know, one of the things that—I was recently—not—well, not recently now; it's going on a couple years—with Deng Xiaoping. And then, after that, with the present leader of China.

And when Barack wanted me to get to know him, when he—when he was Vice President, because it was clear he was going to become the President. And so we—I traveled 17,000 miles with him in China and the United States. We were in the Tibetan Plateau. And I had a simultaneous translator, and he had one, and that's how we communicated. Just the two of us.

By the way, I turned in all my records. [Laughter]

At any rate. And we're in the Tibetan Plateau, and he turned to me, and he said, "Can you define America for me?" I said: "Yes, I can. In one word." My word as a Biden, this is what I told him. "One word: possibilities."

That's why I feel so comfortable in this community.

Everything is—think about it: We're the only nation in the world where we are not based on our ethnicity. We're not based on our religion. We're not—we're based on the notion of an idea. Only nation that's created on an idea—and a Greek idea; a Greek idea going back thousands of years—that we hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men and women are created equal, endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights.

We've never lived up to it, but we've never walked away from it. We've never walked away from it.

But the truth of the matter is that—I told you when I ran last time, in 2020, that it was really at stake—democracy was really in the balance. For real.

I don't think anybody would have thought that we'd be in a situation where we saw on—what happened on January the 6th, where people are charging through the Capitol, killing and—end up killing a couple guards, and all that happened.

And a lot of it hasn't really fundamentally changed. Hasn't fundamentally changed. We're still in a battle for democracy around the world and here at home.

And the idea—I was—the first meeting I had after I became President, I was—went to a—it's called the G-7, the largest—the seventh largest countries in terms of our economic power. And it was held in Great Britain. And we were sitting around a table, and I sat down, and I said, "Well, America is back." And Macron looked at me, and he said, "For how long?" "For how long?"

And then what happened was, Scholz looked at—well, I shouldn't get into names. The press are still here. But the—one of the other leaders looked at me and said, "What would you think, Mr. President, if you went to bed tonight, woke up tomorrow morning and found out that a couple thousand people rushed the British Parliament, walked down—ran down to the House of Commons, broke down the doors to try to overturn an election? What would America think?" We'd be stunned.

Well, the rest of the world has been stunned by what we—what we've been through.

And we've got more to do. But we're finally breaking through. We're finally beginning to break through in ways where we're making it clear who we are. We are a democratic country that's based on decency. We have a lot that we have to overcome still. But we—when we put our heads together, even as we—remember, when I got elected, they said we couldn't get anything major done, especially there'd be nothing bipartisan done.

Well, we passed the infrastructure bill—a billion 200 million dollars. A billion dollars. It was going to change the nature of America. We used to have the number one—we used to be ranked number one in the world in terms of infrastructure. Now we're number 13. How can you lead the world with a second-rate infrastructure?

We find ourselves at a—with the legislation we passed dealing with health care, dealing with the environment: the IRA. Well, what—we've decided that—the idea that in America we pay the highest price for the same drug that is made—manufactured—whether it's here, wherever it's manufactured, we pay a higher price than any place in the world. Whatever drug you—whatever prescription drug you have, you can go to—you could in the past go to Paris, you could go to

London, you could go to Zurich, you could go anywhere and you get it cheaper. You go to Canada and get it cheaper.

Well, we passed the legislation that said: Here's the deal. Medicare can negotiate drug prices, like they do for veterans. Can negotiate drug prices. And guess what? Just in the first 6 months it's reduced the Federal deficit by 1 billion 600 million dollars, just in the first 6—just—right off the bat. And the rest of what we pass is going to—another \$200 billion is going to be cut.

The point is that the Federal Government has to pay out less for the same thing they committed to take care. And people can get their drugs cheaper and more reasonably with much less stress.

We also decided what we were going to do is, we were going to do something about the environment. The irony of all ironies is, now we're in a big fight in the—the new—there's a lot—look, there's a lot of really good Republicans. But this is—this is not your father's Republican Party. This is a different breed of cat, as they say. The MAGA Republicans are in a very different position.

And so you have a Republican leader of the House of Representatives now who is controlled by the bare majority of their party, and these guys have a very different view. For example, they want to say we're not going to pay our debt—we're not going to pay our debt that's accumulated over 200 years, putting everything in jeopardy—literally every single thing in jeopardy, in terms of our reputation, in terms of our finances, in terms of a whole range of things. Moody's estimates we'd lose 760,000 jobs.

Listen, you guys don't need to know all the—because you know it already.

And why? Because there's a desire, for example, to cut out that legislation, which I just referenced. Also to cut out the idea that we're providing people and industries with the ability to have a tax deduction for certain things they do.

For example, you may have seen in the New York Times a major article—I guess it was 2 days ago now—where they talked about Texas is becoming the leading State in the Nation for solar, wind, and bio. And guess what? It's working. But they want to get rid of it. No, I'm not joking.

The condition for not—for avoiding national debt is, we get rid of the Inflation Reduction Act, which has \$367 billion in it to deal with the issue of the—of climate. Why? Because the energy industry doesn't want it. We're going to need oil for a long time. We're going to need gas for a long time.

But the idea that we are—it's all working, and they don't want to be known. They don't want to have alternative energy as a major source of energy.

So there's a whole lot of things going on that are sort of counterintuitive to what we thought—I thought at least the Republicans I used to work with believe. We disagree like the devil on tax policy and a range of other policies. And in this room, we probably have disagreements on tax policy.

But the idea that we're in a position where we've decided that we're going to go back—back in a big way—is just something I didn't anticipate happening. I didn't anticipate happening.

And so what this is all about, in my view, is deciding on what we're going to do, how are we going to—in the first 2 years, I've cut the deficit—the deficit more than any President has in the history of the United States of America. \$1.7 trillion. Cut the deficit by that amount of money. And guess what? We've created more jobs than any President has in a 4-year period, let alone 2. Over 12 million—12 million jobs—12,350,000, I think. Unemployment is at 3.4 percent.

We're also investing in America where we find that there's a whole range of other things that are happening, including we have 800,000 manufacturing jobs.

We invented the computer chip. Okay? We, the United States, invented it when we went to the Moon. That's how we got it. A little chip smaller, as you all know, than the tip of your little finger.

In addition to that, what happened was, we had 40 percent of the market three decades ago. We have a total of 9 percent of the market.

What are we doing? We are the ones who made—we're the ones that—and—[inaudible]—the efficacy and efficiency. It goes for everything from sophisticated weapons systems to whether or not you can build an automobile today.

And what do they want to do? When I went around the world and around the country, I said we're going to increase manufacturing in this country. Well, guess what? We have \$450 billion committed—\$450 billion committed to rebuild this industry. Just go up to—just go up to Syracuse, New York. Go into—anyway. All over the country.

And what do they want to do? They want to get rid of that. Why? Because—I'm not sure why. I'm not sure why.

But so there's a lot going on here that is—totally seems to be counterintuitive to what Democrats and Republicans used to be for—used to be for.

For example, on the Medicare piece, we're now in a situation where we've been fighting Big Pharma for a long time. As those of you—and I hope you have some stock in Big Pharma—but the fact of the matter is, whether you do or not—in fact, the fact is that we pay more for prescription drugs than any nation in the world—any major nation in the world.

Well, guess what? When you decide that it costs \$10 to make insulin—and you know anybody who has type 1 or 2—type 2 diabetes—I won't ask you to raise your hand, but over 48 percent of the people in the country.

Anyway. Guess what? They were charging anywhere from three to eight hundred dollars a month for that insulin to keep your kids alive and keep you alive.

Well, guess what? They want to get—get rid of it. Well, now it costs \$10 to manufacture. To package it is about \$12. And if you—we say, "Okay, you all—you can't make it any more than \$35, or we're not going to pay it." Well, guess what? That saves the Government 1 trillion 600 billion dollars. Excuse me, \$160 billion—because it doesn't have to pay it out to provide the Medicare commitment it made.

The same way with whether we move forward with that same bill we passed. By the year—by the beginning of this coming year, the next January, no senior is going to have to pay, no matter how much the drug is, even if they have a sophisticated cancer drug they're paying 8, 10, 12, 15,000 bucks a year for, they're not going to have to pay more than \$3,500 for every single drug they can—have to consume with prescription. And the following year is \$2,000.

That saves—that saves the Federal Government billions of dollars. Billions of dollars. It cuts the deficit billions of dollars, and Pharma still makes billions of dollars.

So I guess what I'm trying to say is, I think we're sort of standing things in the head—or on their head when we talk about what we're—what we're going to—what my very, very—I don't want to say conservative, but my very different Republican friends, who are still a minority within the Republican Party, but they control the party right now.

And so the question is going to be, what do we have to do to finish the job? And we have to finish the job.

And the choice is very—pretty, truly clear. Freedom is at stake. Economic freedom. A woman's freedom to choose is at stake. We're in a situation where our personal freedoms, right up to the right to vote and how we vote and whether you can vote by absentee ballot or whatever, all that's going—it's all being played with.

None of you in your lifetime, including as old as I am, are around to know a time when it's been more at stake, other than the very beginning of the civil rights movement back in the sixties.

And so I think what we have to do is remember who in God's name we are: We're the United States of America. We're the United States of America. There's nothing beyond our capacity. Not a single thing we've ever set our mind to as a nation have we failed to do.

When I was asked by the press, and the press is still here—I was asked by the press about a year ago: "What—if I could do any one thing, what would I do?" I said, "I would cure cancer." They say, "Why?" I said, "Because people think it's impossible." And I would do something that America dream big again, that we can do anything that we set our mind to.

Well, guess what? Cancer deaths are being reduced significantly, because we've invested over \$5 billion in research so far.

There's a lot—I guess what I'm trying to say is, we've got to remember who we are. We've got to have more confidence in who we are. And we got to understand that the rest of the world does look to us.

Madeleine Albright was right: We are the essential nation. We are the essential nation.

I was with the Greek Prime Minister—anyway. I'm going—I was warned if I talked too long, they're going to block traffic and we're all going to be in trouble. [*Laughter*]

But the point is that—I just think that—I'll conclude with this point. You've heard me say it before: I think we're at an inflection point in history. We reach that point about every five or six generations, where so much is changing that the things that we do within a narrow period of time—2, 3, 4 years—are going to determine what the fate of the Nation looks like for the next five or six decades.

It happened after World War II. That postwar period is gone.

What's it going to look like? What's the world going to look like? And I mean it literally, not figuratively. What's it going to look like the next three, four, or five decades if America does not stand for—act like what it stands for, if we don't do the things we said we were going to do?

And I'm—I'm shortening this too much because I'm even getting to the point where I'm probably not making some sense to you, but let me go back to His All Holiness.

You know, not a joke when I say this: Father, I think you were the one that called me when His All Holiness was stranded up in—was it Bulgaria?

Father Karloutsos. You're right.

The President. And what could I do as Vice President? And I got engaged, and I had a—as many call, a "come to the Lord" meeting with—with the Turks about—what, you think I'm joking. I'm not.

Father Karloutsos. Oh, I—[*inaudible*].

The President. And I went to Turkey.

Father Karloutsos. It was also with the "Grexit" that you really got involved.

The President. Yes. And so what happened was—the end result of it was that it worked out. But here's the deal: We finally got a Pope that's similar to His All Holiness.

Father Karloutsos. [*Inaudible*—are the same body.

The President. By the way, they are.

Father Karloutsos. Yes.

The President. And they're the two most—and I say this because you were ready to—[*inaudible*—the two most Christlike figures I've ever met in my life. I met every major leader in the world in the last 45 years. I mean it sincerely. These two men are what Christianity is all about—what it's all about.

And I think that part of who we are is judged by the rest—whether we reflect the values we say we care about. The more we are viewed to reflect them, the more we succeed.

I think there's a lot we can do. I know there's much more to say, much more to do, but the bottom line is this: I'm determined to finish the job.

We can, in fact, have—grow the economy from the middle out and the bottom up, and the wealthy still are going to do very, very well. Everybody pay a fair share, not an exorbitant amount of money. Everybody talking about, "All Biden is going to do if you're a billionaire"—I congratulate you. It's a good deal. No, I mean it. It's great. No problem. Just pay more than 8 percent. That's all. [*Laughter*]

No, I'm—but I don't mean pay 70 percent or pay 35 percent. You know what I mean.

So there's so much that—we're kind of forgetting the basics.

And the one thing that I've learned from my faith, from your faith, and from my involvement is that I think what we're all about is giving everybody a shot. Give everybody a shot. No free ride. Everybody gets a shot.

And the way things are stacked now, a lot of people aren't getting a shot. And that's what my administration is about. And I hope that I'm able to continue.

But thank you all for your help. And I've already talked too much. You're looking at me like, "What's going on?" But anyway.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:53 p.m. at the residence of Nitzia and George Logothetis. In his remarks, he referred to President Xi Jinping of China; former President Barack Obama; President Emmanuel Macron of France; Chancellor Olaf Scholz of Germany; Speaker of the House of Representatives Kevin O. McCarthy; Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis of Greece; Ecumenical Patriarch and Archbishop of Constantinople Bartholomew; and Pope Francis. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

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